

Resource Brief

Tucson Mountain District

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Saguaro National Park
Cultural Resources



A case study in preservation: preserving two culturally significant features with one saguaro.

Introduction

This Cultural Resource Brief summarizes preservation activities at Camp Pima, a Civilian Conservation Corps Camp in the Tucson Mountain District of Saguaro National Park (SNP). Camp Pima was occupied from 1933 to 1941. The preservation activity reported herein consisted of moving one small saguaro and transplanting it to a more desirable location. Two cultural features benefited from the move.

Project Details

A four foot tall Saguaro cactus growing within the ruins of one of the adobe structures at Camp Pima threatened the integrity of the adobe walls. Knowing that the structure has a concrete floor and that Saguaro roots tend to be fairly shallow it was felt that the roots of the cactus would eventually travel along the floor and infiltrate the adobe, thus impacting the integrity of the walls. To protect the adobe brick walls from the invasive roots it was decided to remove the saguaro and transplant it to a more appropriate location.

In May of 2015, biological technicians and the archeologist from SNP preformed the task of transplanting the saguaro.

The new home of the saguaro is the ring of saguaro cactus at the entrance of Camp Pima. The ring of saguaros is itself a significant cultural feature that was created by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. Undoubtedly, the ring was created during the construction of the camp in 1933 when a number of good sized saguaros had to be removed in order to make room for the buildings. Those saguaros were transplanted to form a circle at the entrance to the camp.

Over the past 80 years 10 of the 21 mature saguaros that make up the ring have died. By transplanting the saguaro from the adobe structure to the ring of saguaros, we have protected the structure while insuring the survival of the ring of saguaros.



To be transplanted: small Saguaro growing inside adobe –walled structure.



The ring of saguaros at the entrance to Camp Pima.

If the occasion should arise where another saguaro needs to be moved, the ring of saguaros will be there waiting for the new member to join their small community.

Project Photographs

Photographs documenting the project can be found on the next page.

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Sizing up the situation; starting the excavation to remove saguaro.



Transporting the saguaro to its new home at the ring of saguaros.



Gently removing soil from around the roots of the saguaro.



Preparing the new hole for transplanting the saguaro in the ring of saguaros, at the camp's entrance.



The saguaro is wrapped in foam padding and gently lowered to the ground



Preparing to raise the saguaro to its upright position.



Timber! Wrapped in foam padding the saguaro is now on its side completely free of the soil that once held it in place.



The saguaro has found a new home among friends in the ring of saguaros.

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Access to Camp Pima is strictly prohibited. Currently the area of the park where Camp Pima is located has no hiking trails. Since the park allows no off trail hiking below 4500 ft., except for park guided tours, exploration of the camp is prohibited.